

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – January 31, 2000

Student and business organizations announce support for higher education plan

OLYMPIA – The Washington Student Lobby and the American Electronics Association today urged legislators to support the 2000 Master Plan for Higher Education, a four-year strategic plan for higher education required by state law.

According to the Higher Education Coordinating Board's Master Plan, at least 70,000 more full-time students will seek higher education by 2010; the state will need to fund 52,500 of those students. To meet the needs of its citizens for education, the plan places 21st Century learners at the center of higher education decision-making.

"Students are delighted with the Master Plan and are particularly pleased with its strong emphasis on student learning," said Cody Benson, State President of the Washington Student Lobby. The 2000 Master Plan proposes that students be evaluated based on what they know and can do, rather than on how much time they've spent in class or how many credits they've earned.

Benson also praised the plan's proposal to link future increases in tuition at public colleges and universities to the rate of change in state per capita personal income, which is one indicator of residents' ability to pay higher tuition costs.

"This linkage will keep tuition affordable and predictable and allow students and families to prepare for the costs of college," said Benson.

Also speaking in support of the Master Plan today was the American Electronics Association, Washington Council. "We are in broad agreement with the Master Plan," said Dennis Brewer, Chairman of the AEA Higher Education Task Force and Managing Director of CNA Consulting and Engineering. He applauded the plan's call to invest in an additional 16,500 "full-time equivalent" students in high-demand programs. "The traditional approach isn't producing enough qualified graduates to meet the demand."

Brewer also supported the Master Plan's strong focus on e-learning as a way to create additional opportunity. "E-learning allows us to reach learners where they are and frees up classroom space," he said. The Master Plan recommends that, by 2010, public colleges and universities use classrooms two additional hours per week, and that the average full-time student receives one and one-half lecture contact-hours per week through e-learning. If the schools can achieve these modest changes, the state can accommodate as many as 42,000 additional full-time students and save nearly \$90 million in capital costs (in 1999 dollars).

The Washington Student Lobby represents the students attending Washington public colleges and universities.

The American Electronics Association is a 3,000-member national organization that represents the high technology industry, including software, semiconductors, telecommunications, computers, instrumentation, medical equipment, and related business services.

The Master Plan is now before the Legislature for adoption, after which it will be the state's higher education policy until the next update of the plan in 2004.

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